



National Coalition for the Homeless

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Fact Sheet and Lesson Plan for Third-Fifth Grade Students

What Does It Mean To Be Homeless?

Most people in the United States and in our own communities live in homes. They have warm beds to sleep in and plenty of food and clothing. However, there are some people who don't have those things; they do not have the luxury of sleeping in a warm bed at night or eating healthy and nutritious food or buying new clothes. These people are homeless.

A homeless person does not have a regular and safe place to sleep. Sometimes they sleep on the streets, in parks, or in abandoned buildings. Others sleep in shelters or at a friends' house on the couch or floor. They do not have a home to call their own.

On any given night, approximately 750,000 men, women and children are homeless in America.

Why Are People Homeless?

There are many reasons why people are homeless. Sometimes a person is homeless because they do not make enough money to pay rent or own a home. They might work every day of the week, sometimes more than one job, and still not have enough money to afford a place to live. Some homeless people have a disability that makes it hard or impossible for them to work or live on their own. Each homeless person is different and has their own story to tell, and some are homeless much longer than others. It might take one person only a few weeks to find a place to stay, while others it might take months, years or even their whole life.

What Does A Homeless Person Look Like?

Anyone can be homeless, it does not matter if you are a boy or a girl, where you live, what your religious beliefs are, how old you are, or what color your skin is. Each person comes from a different background and circumstances. Think about the people in your class and where they came from and where they live. Each student in your class is very different, and it's the same for the homeless population. Homeless people are not just

adults; there are children who are homeless too. These children are of all ages, backgrounds and come from all different places. The reasons that they are homeless are as different as they are. Sometimes they are homeless because they can't live at home anymore, other times they are homeless with their families.

Is There A Way To End Homelessness?

Ending homelessness is a possibility, and many cities and states are working hard to create programs and help people who are homeless. There are several ways in which these places are working to end homelessness:

1. They build homes that are more affordable for people to live in.
2. They can pay people enough money in their jobs so that they can pay rent.
3. They can teach people how to keep their house and pay their bills on time.

How Can I Help?

There are so many ways that you can help homeless people. Homeless people need the same kinds of things you do, so one way to help is to donate clothes, books, school supplies and food to a shelter. The shelter will give your things to the homeless people who need them.

You can go to a local homeless shelter with your family or friends and cook a meal for the people there.

You can also ask your parents to call their Congressman and ask them to support laws that will help end homelessness.

The most important way to help homeless people is to treat them just like you would treat your friends or family. Treat homeless people just like you want to be treated.

Activities for Teachers/Leaders
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1. Food/Clothing Drive

Materials Needed: Paper, Markers, Cardboard Box, Number for a Homeless Shelter in your area

Have the kids make a list of all the things that they could give to a homeless person. The list should include clothing, canned goods, books and school supplies. Ask the kids what they use every day and what they think a homeless person might need also.

Send a letter home with each child explaining that your class is having a food/clothing drive and you will be collecting items to donate to a homeless shelter. Have the kids bring in items throughout the week and put them in a cardboard box.

Bring the box to a local homeless shelter or food bank and drop off the items

2. Additional Resources

Additional Lesson plans and ideas for programming can be found at http://staffweb.esc12.net/~mbooth/homeless_education_service/homeless_education_service_homepage.htm

3. Additional Information

For more information about the issues of homelessness please visit www.nationalhomeless.org, the National Coalition for the Homeless website. There are additional fact sheets about a variety of issues and statistics that can be used as other resources.

Sources:

National Alliance to End Homelessness, A Homelessness Fact Sheet for Children in Grades 3-5, www.endhomelessness.org